Ecotourism in Canada

Canadian Environmental Advisory Council

Canada

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Ecotourism in Canada

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Canadian Environmental
Advisory Council

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Canadian Environmental Advisory Council

The Canadian Environmental Advisory Council (CEAC) is a body representing a cross-section of Canadians who are knowledgeable and concerned about the environment. It operates in a confidential advisory capacity to the federal Minister of the Environment. It provides the Minister with an alternative to the advice provided by the Department of the Environment (Environment Canada) and other federal agencies, and to the advice of specific interest groups. The Council's public role, in terms of activities such as the publication of reports, is secondary to its primary function of providing advice to the Minister of the Environment.

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Canadian Environmental Advisory Council | **Conseil consultatif canadien de l'environnement**

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0H3

Minister of the Environment
Ottawa, Canada

Dear Minister:

It is with great pleasure that I submit to you the Council's interim report on ecotourism in Canada. The Council, together with tourism experts and others interested in ecotourism, has worked to define ecotourism and to describe its future in Canada. We hereby present our recommendations for this increasingly important industry.

I am sure that Council members join me in expressing our appreciation for the opportunity to explore this topic on your behalf.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Page
Chairman

Canada

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1 Introduction

Preamble

Ecotourism is recognized as a distinct form of tourism. It is distinctive because it links low impacts on the resource base and host community, environmental conservation, sustainable economic activity, and distinctive behaviour and learning by the consumer. Ecotourism is practised in many countries, perhaps most evidently in developing nations such as Costa Rica, Thailand, and Nepal (Figure 1).

Ecotourism has existed in Canada in various forms for many years. The subject is now of considerable interest to many Canadian groups and individuals, among them ecotourism practitioners, government policy makers, and consumers. Local groups of like-minded persons are developing codes of ethics and practice. Provincial and territorial government agencies are being attracted to a marketing opportunity until now largely developed by ecotourism practitioners. Ecotourism has become a subject of national debate, and consumers are searching for distinctive Canadian ecotourism experiences.

Ecotourism has become a significant component of the largest growth industry on Earth — tourism (Figure 2). As tourism grows, there will be increasing effects, for better or for worse, on the landscapes, societies, and economies of locales and regions where it is concentrated. A more precise understanding of ecotourism, its role, and the environments where it is practised will demand particular thoughtfulness from policy makers and practitioners, consumers and communities. This is particularly so given current estimates of the global scale of ecotourism.

Indeed, it could be argued that ecotourism holds great potential as a sustainable development indicator. The potential lies in our ability to foster within the tourism industry and tourism consumers attributes that lead to sustainable development. Ecotourism, more than any other tourism activity, is sustainable development. As a corollary, ecotourism is the most vulnerable of tourism activities; it has the most to lose when practised in an ill-conceived, uncontrolled, and insensitive manner. Accordingly, it is now, and will continue to be, intensely scrutinized to justify its raison d'etre and to confirm its on-the-ground policies, guidelines, and practices.

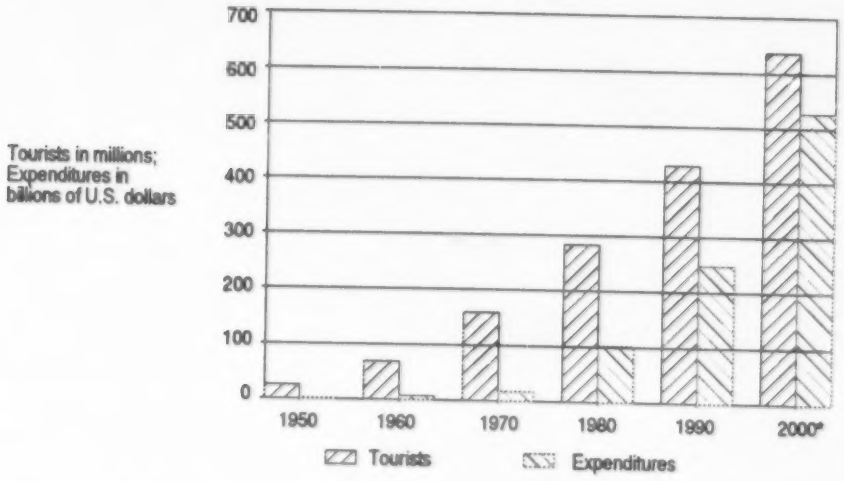
Although Canadians participate as entrepreneurs and ecotourists at home and abroad, the domestic state of ecotourism is not widely appreciated. Only recently has ecotourism surfaced in the popular press (Figure 3). Ecotourism has little in the way of industry standards or regulatory controls, and its present execution lies somewhere between what the customer wants and what ecotourism firms are prepared to deliver. To paraphrase one Canadian operator, "you can go just about anywhere in Canada, do anything, and sell it in the name of ecotourism." Yet as Filion (1991) argues, ecotourism is a powerful instrument for conservation, with distinctive socioeconomic benefits. This has been demonstrated elsewhere in the world, for example, in Costa Rica; we could achieve the same results in Canada. It is therefore timely to examine this form of tourism in the Canadian context. This is precisely what the present document sets out to do.

Figure 1
Examples of International Tourism Linked to Nature and Culture

Globe and Mail
October 26 and November 2, 1991

Figure 2
Contemporary Statistics on World Tourism

World tourism growth 1950–2000



Data from World Tourism Organization 1991

** forecast*

Top 10 Tourist Destinations 1990

	Million tourists	Percent of world total
France	50	11.65
United States	39.7	9.26
Spain	34.3	7.99
Italy	26.6	6.22
Austria	19	4.43
Hungary	19	4.43
Britain	17.6	4.12
Germany	17	3.97
Canada	15.2	3.54
Switzerland	12.9	3.02

World Tourism Organization 1991

Top 10 Tourist Nationalities 1990

	Million Tourists
Germans	57.3
Americans	44.9
British	36.2
Canadians	20.5
Italians	19.7
French	19.2
Dutch	16.4
Japanese	16.2
Scandinavians	15.8
Belgians	11.5

World Tourism Organization 1991

Figure 3
Ecotourism in Canada's Popular Press

End Assault on Global Village, Ecotourism Melds Discovery with Preservation
Calgary Herald, January 11, 1992

Whale Watchers Enjoy Environment Up Close
The Guardian, Charlottetown, October 8, 1991

The Eco Stampede
Report on Business Magazine, Globe and Mail, May, 1991

Canada — Real Eco-Tourism Potential
Financial Times of Canada, April 29, 1991

Tourists Urged to Adopt Eco-Code of Behaviour
Halifax Chronicle Herald, January 19, 1991

Visitors urged to be responsible
Calgary Herald, January 19, 1991

Help From Tourists Seen as Last Hope for Parks, Wildlife (Second Annual International Symposium on Ecotourism)
Calgary Herald, January 12, 1991

Tourists Urged to Adopt Strict "Eco-Code"
Financial Post Daily, January 15, 1991

Tourism and Sustainable Development

Canadians have a strong sense that a national commitment must be made to practical applications of sustainable development. The commitment would build upon global initiatives of the 1980s — such as the 1980 World Conservation Strategy and 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development ("Brundtland report") — and their expression in Canada through vehicles such as the National Task Force on Environment and Economy (1987), the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and the sustainable development and conservation strategies of round tables, environment councils, and other groups.

The National Task Force, echoing the Brundtland report, defined sustainable development to be "development that ensures that the utilization of resources and the environment today does not damage prospects for their use by future generations." In the 90s, the message permeates all sectors of Canada. It is promoted by the federal government through the Green Plan. The private sector has responded through means such as the Responsible Care Commitment of the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association and the Environmental Code of Practice of the Canadian Petroleum Association. Polls reveal the Canadian public to be preoccupied with personal health and the health of the environment, and widely engaged in actions and behaviours — recycling and ecotourism among them — that are symptoms of their desire for a new relationship with the Earth.

The search for consensus, for common visions, for partnerships and sharing, permeates sustainable development. It is expressed in the National Task Force report and Green Plan, among other contemporary documents. It is reflected in national, provincial, and territorial round tables with their vision statements and other work for a sustainable future. It is also visible in the ways being sought to practise tourism as sustainable development. Evidence of this effort now exists from the Queen Charlottes to Quebec, Labrador, and Newfoundland, from Alberta's Bow Valley to the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Figure 4). The procedures and practices common to many such activities could be called "ecotourism," or perhaps what we are witnessing is ecodevelopment:

> . . . *an approach to development aimed at harmonizing social and economic objectives with ecologically sound management, in a spirit of solidarity with future generations; based on the principle of self-reliance, satisfaction of basic needs, a new symbiosis of man and earth; another kind of qualitative growth, not zero growth, not negative growth* (Sachs 1978).

Figure 4
Ecotourism Partnerships in Atlantic Canada

Introduction

The Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Centre for the Environment (QLF) announces a strategy to expand natural resource based tourism opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador while permanently establishing and supporting local conservation initiatives in the area. In cooperation with existing groups in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Atlantic Centre is developing and piloting thematic resource tours and vacation planning for select provincial tourists, simultaneously providing assistance and building a stewardship fund for conservation projects and initiatives.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Stewardship Fund

We are setting up a new program called the Newfoundland and Labrador Stewardship Fund. It is being established now to help support community conservation projects in upcoming years. This is a program for conservation work in Newfoundland and Labrador only. It is being designed to encourage local community groups to:

- *gain experience through organizational and leadership development;*
- *identify and carry out conservation initiatives;*
- *develop support for conservation while also addressing economic, social, and cultural needs of communities.*

Tourism: A Growing Partner in Conservation

We believe important support for the Stewardship Fund will come from responsible tourism. More and more, the tourist of the 90s is becoming "green." People are looking for meaningful wilderness and cultural experiences, reflecting an emerging conservation ethic in the tourism industry.

If you are an "adventure" tour operator or outfitter, with a particular vested interest in the sustained natural and cultural environment of this province, The Atlantic Centre is proposing a partnership with you — a relationship which we feel will not only benefit your business, but will also generate support for conservation activity around the province.

In Business Together

If you are committed to sound conservation practices in your business, then we are interested in helping you market your product to select conservation and environmental groups.

Brochure
Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Centre for the Environment c. 1991

Canada has not come suddenly upon the concept of sustainable tourism. Canadian experience parallels global thinking as reflected in the influential Manila Declaration (1980) and the United Nations Environment Program (1982) (which view environmental protection and enhancement as essential in tourism development). National park conferences in 1968 and 1978 addressed the subject; the Tourism Industry Association of Canada made a tripartite presentation at the Canadian Assembly on National Parks and Protected Areas in 1985. At the Globe 90 conference in Vancouver, the tourism interests produced an action strategy for developing sustainable tourism. The strategy spelled out the role of governments, nongovernment organizations, the tourism industry, and individuals. Today in Canada tourism and sustainable development are under intense scrutiny. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy has just completed a national "Tourism Sector Dialogue" on sustainable development. The Dialogue led to codes of ethics for industry and for tourists, as well as guidelines for tourism industry associations, ministries of tourism, and individual industry sectors. In October 1991, Tourism Canada sponsored a seminar and workshop on tourism and sustainable development at the University of Waterloo. Shortly after, the Tourism and Travel Research Association pursued the same theme at its annual conference. Tourism and sustainable development surfaced early as a theme in Tourism 2000, a discussion begun in October of 1991 by Alberta Tourism with the tourism industry, other sectors such as transportation, and the public in Alberta. A Challenge Statement on sustainable tourism was prepared at the Globe 92 conference recently convened in Vancouver.

Ecotourism is widely viewed to have a place in the debate about sustainable development and tourism. Workshops and seminars across Canada point to the urgency with which people wish to understand the nuances of the

subject, and to develop ways to give it a place in Canadian tourism in the future.

Canadian Environmental Advisory Council and Ecotourism

For some time the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council (CEAC) has been interested in the relationship between tourism and the environment. Initially, the Council considered a broad-based approach; CEAC would raise consciousness and make recommendations to the Minister of the Environment on environmental issues related to domestic and international tourism. With the onset of the National Round Table's Tourism Sector Dialogue, however, a more prescribed focus emerged — that of ecotourism. It would be possible, the Council determined, to address ecotourism in ways complementary to the work begun by the National Round Table. CEAC's earlier reports on land use planning (Richardson 1989) and protected areas (CEAC 1991) might be useful in this endeavour. Hence the present study.

The Council identified four tasks:

- Clarify what is meant by ecotourism, and suggest a definition
- Explain why governments in Canada should be concerned; that is, interested and involved with ecotourism issues, including global aspects
- Develop a code of ethics for ecotourism that seeks to maximize economic opportunities within appropriate ecological and social constraints
- Prepare policy recommendations, particularly for the federal government.

These tasks were the focus of a CEAC-sponsored national workshop on ecotourism held in Calgary, September 9 and 10, 1991. Participants came from many constituencies and from regions throughout Canada.

CEAC addressed ecotourism in its 1991 document *A Protected Areas Vision for Canada* (Figure 5). The Council identified three special management issues that are unique threats and opportunities for protected areas. These were tourism and recreation management, the role of the private sector, and ecotourism. The Council's observations on ecotourism deserve to be repeated because they are a good starting point for further discussion of the subject. It is important to note that CEAC commented on ecotourism as practised in strictly protected areas. Such areas are targets for ecotourism activities, but, as the Council points out, these lands are already under various pressures, and they currently make up less than four percent of the country — well short of the 12 percent suggested by the Endangered Spaces Campaign.

Ecotourism, it must be stressed, could take place over a far larger area than that benefitting from strict protection. Unprotected areas, however, are more vulnerable to land uses harmful to ecotourism and may warrant different consideration in making policy recommendations.

Ecotourism is likely to appear in concert with and in competition with other claimants to resources. Unless appropriately recognized in planning and decision making, ecotourism may have to take second place to other uses. Grifone (1991), for instance, has raised this spectre in investigating the consequences of widespread forest harvesting in northern Alberta. Clearly there is reason for ecotourism to be in the realm of land use planning, about which Richardson (1989) stated:

> *If land use planning is to be used effectively to support sustainable development, there must be a clear and coherent structure of communication and responsibilities, from policy direction to day-to-day management and decision making, in every land-related public program.*

Figure 5
Ecotourism in Protected Areas

The preferred type of tourism for national parks and protected areas is a form known as ecotourism (ecology-based tourism). While natural environment or wildland tourism has taken on many titles over the years, from Green Tourism to what Germans call Studienreisen (study tourism), the term ecotourism was coined by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain in Mexico City in 1983. He defined it as "travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas."

Ecotourism is a rapidly increasing segment of the tourism economy, and it has proven to be a powerful conservation force in many parts of the world, providing an economic incentive for protecting environments and wildlife. In the 1990s, as increasing numbers of visitors and their demand for services and facilities continue to stress protected areas, the term ecotourism has become synonymous with a preferred ethic and higher environmental consciousness among tourists. The term has come to signify a more environmentally friendly side of the spectrum of wildland (green) tourism, and the preferred model for both visitors and tourism developers. Eight characteristics of modern ecotourism have recently been described by Dr. Jim Butler of the University of Alberta.

1. *It must promote positive environmental ethics — fostering preferred behaviour in its participants.*
2. *It does not degrade the resource. There is no consumptive erosion of the natural environment visited. While sport hunting and fishing may be counted under the broad heading of wildland (green) tourism, they are classified under the division of adventure tourism rather than ecotourism.*
3. *It concentrates on intrinsic rather than extrinsic values. Facilities and services may "facilitate" the encounter with the intrinsic resource; they never become attractions in their own right, nor do they distract from the natural attraction itself.*
4. *It is biocentric rather than homocentric in philosophy. Ecotourists enter the environment accepting it on its terms, not expecting it to change or be modified for their convenience.*
5. *It must benefit the wildlife and environment. The question of whether or not the environment (not just people) has accrued "benefits" may be measured in a range of ways — socially, economically, scientifically, managerially, or politically. If the environment has not at least achieved a net benefit toward its sustainability and ecological integrity, then the activity is not ecotourism.*
6. *It is a first-hand experience with the natural environment. Movies and zoological parks do not constitute an ecotourism experience. Visitor centres and interpretive slide shows are included when they direct people to a first-hand experience.*
7. *It has an "expectation of gratification" that is measured in terms of education and/or appreciation rather than in thrill-seeking or physical achievement; the latter being more characteristic of adventure tourism.*
8. *It has a high cognitive and affective experiential dimension. Ecotourism involves a high level of preparation and knowledge from both leaders and participants, and the satisfaction derived from the experiences is felt and expressed strongly in emotional and inspirational ways.*

Canadian Environmental Advisory Council 1991

If ecotourism were to be incorporated in land use planning, it would benefit from the principal activities of land use planning programs:

- Gathering information and identifying issues
- Establishing goals
- Developing and evaluating options (with effective participation by all affected interests), including implementation programs
- Putting into effect program coordination and other means of plan implementation
- Continuous monitoring, periodic review, and eventual revision of the plan.

Richardson (1989) adds that land use planning is only a tool to be employed as society dictates, which can only be as effective as society permits. The challenge is to determine how a fledgling industry can be accepted, nurtured, and developed in the public interest — in ways that sustain the creativity, enthusiasm, and investment of its operators; the participation of its consumers; and the heritage resources upon which it draws.

CEAC has raised this issue. A review of the scope for public policy in developing and promoting ecotourism should address two fundamental questions: *Is there a need for policies to actively promote ecotourism?* and, *Is there a need for policies to control ecotourism and ensure that it is consistent with environmental goals?* Ideally, to fulfil the Council's mandate, the answers sought should be consistent with the policies and programs of all federal departments. These should include national park policies and relevant federal decision-making processes, and should take into account the specific responsibilities of Environment Canada and Tourism Canada.

Because sustainable development relies heavily on consensus seeking and partnership, changes to public policy would involve other groups. Foremost are the departments of tourism, natural resources, and environment in the provinces and territories. Then there are the provincial and territorial round tables and the tourism industry associations. These bodies have the potential to influence both their members and public policy makers. This document is for all of them, because only a collective vision of ecotourism will yield a successful product.

2 Concept to Definition: A Context for Ecotourism

Ecotourism often means different things to different people. Just as "sustainable development" fits a range of definitions and agendas, so, too, does "ecotourism" (Figure 6). The variations have yielded widely different results, in the experiences of consumers, in the effects of operators' practices on host environments and communities, and in the consequences for heritage conservation. Questions have been raised about the true purpose and scope of ecotourism. Some people are uncertain about what ecotourism really accomplishes.

Fortunately in Canada there is an opportunity to understand and to act upon the promise of ecotourism. Though there is not much yet in the way of declared government policy on the subject, individuals and organizations engaged in the promotion and provision of responsible tourism have moved to give ecotourism a context; to discuss the means for its implementation; and to integrate ecotourism into local environments, societies, and economies.

How is this being done? There are formal deliberations on the subject at conferences and in journal articles, but real action is already under way. Individual operators and organizations such as the Société linnéenne du Québec and the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association practise real ecotourism, in the way they manage interactions among ecotourists, the environment, and the local community, or in the way they support environmental conservation with some of the proceeds of their entrepreneurial activities (Figure 7). Some general principles of ecotourism are being acknowledged and refined. Codes of ethics and codes of practice are already in place, most being local in origin and in application. Examples include the code of conduct for commercial tour

Figure 6
Terms Drawn from the Literature with Links to Ecotourism

Adventure Travel
Alternative Tourism
Anthropological Tourism
Appropriate Tourism
Biotourism
Cultural Tourism
"Drifter" Tourism
Ecological Tourism
Ecotravel
Ecotripping
Ecoventures
Environmental Conservation
Environmental Education
Environmental Tourism
Ethical Travel
Ethnic Tourism
Green Tourism
Jungle Tourism
Low-Impact Tourism
Natural Areas Travel
"Nature-Oriented" Tourism
Nature Tourism
Nature Vacations
Nonconsumptive Wildlife Recreation
Primitive and Remote Travel
Resource-Based Tourism
Rural Tourism
Safari Tourism
Science Tourism
Socially Responsible Tourism
Soft Adventure Tourism
Special Interest Tourism
Sustainable Tourism
Travel With Mother Nature
Wilderness Tourism

Scace, Grifone, and Usher 1991

operators in Gwaii Haanas/ South Moresby and guidelines for operators of vessels sailing near St. Lawrence cetaceans.

These examples are regional, and they are collaborative actions of many parties. But are they all truly ecotourism? As examples, are they transferable? Do they provide clues to the need for action by government agencies and organizations with mandates in resource management, tourism, and sustainable development? To develop effective recommendations for public policy and private practice, there is a need to:

- Explore the concept of ecotourism
- Set out the criteria
- Present a definition.

Then a preferred ecotourism framework in Canada may develop. Some consensus in these matters is essential if the practice is to be universally supported in Canada and contribute broadly to sustainable use of our natural and cultural heritage. As a corollary, we should not so prescribe ecotourism with rules and guidelines that we stunt its delivery. Ecotourism will benefit from cooperative arrangements and from monitoring the activities of participants.

Figure 7
Consideration for the Environment

Simply by joining one of our trips you are helping to preserve Canada's wilderness regions. This is accomplished in several ways: 1) Three percent (3%) of each trip sold is automatically donated to the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association (CRCA) which co-ordinates a country-wide waterway clean-up program to preserve and protect our natural environment; 2) Most of our guides live in the regions that our trips explore, and most of our food and equipment is arranged locally as well. Consequently, we spend a greater than average share of your trip cost in small, often remote communities. As the economies of these communities are usually based on "resource development", your dollars demonstrate to government and citizens alike that some local employment and land-use options depend on a natural environment; 3) Our trips visit some of Canada's most immaculate regions. Our guides will show you by example how to explore and enjoy these wild places while preserving them for future generations.

Canada's Canoe Adventures
Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association
1991

The Concept and What It Can Do

Canada's relatively unmodified landscapes and ecosystems have attracted travellers for more than a century. Indeed, the prospect of international tourism was as instrumental in the creation of our national park system as were thoughts of landscape protection. Today the situation is global, because parks and other protected or relatively undisturbed landscapes are primary targets for millions of international tourists.

These landscapes are under stress (Figure 8). Their environmental and potential economic value in an undisturbed state frequently goes unacknowledged or is deemed secondary to the value of other land uses and short-term economic return. Where they are protected and managed, these "special places" by their very appeal draw numbers of visitors that threaten their ecological integrity. Unprotected landscapes that are attractive to tourists are even more vulnerable.

A more meaningful and less consumptive relationship between visitors and their host environments and communities is the focus of ecotourism. Hector Caballos-Lascurain coined the term in 1983, visualizing ecotourism as:

> *. . . tourism that consists in travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations*

(both past and present) found in these areas. In these terms, nature oriented tourism implies a scientific, aesthetic or philosophical approach to travel, although the ecological tourist need not be a professional scientist, artist or philosopher. The main point is that the person who practices ecotourism has the opportunity of immersing himself/herself in nature in a manner generally not available in the urban environment.

In his statement are several elements that contribute to our present understanding of ecotourism:

- Travel that is linked to preservation and conservation of natural environments and landscapes
- Travel that takes one to experience at first hand relatively natural areas in a nonconsumptive way
- An appreciation — a love — of the natural world, and an understanding of the cultural heritage and social organization of the host community
- A focus on internal personal experience and achievement rather than on physical accomplishment and experiences that could be readily found elsewhere.

To these elements may be added a sustainable economic activity for host communities. World Wildlife Fund president Kathryn Fuller says of developing nations engaged in ecotourism:

Ecotourism can generate badly needed revenue for local and regional economies, heightened local awareness of the importance of conservation, and new incentives for governments and dwellers in and around appealing natural areas to preserve them.

Put bluntly, ecotourism can provide an economic justification to conserve areas that might not otherwise be protected. This relationship has been demonstrated in East Africa; it is being explored in Central and South America (Boo 1990), and similar arguments have been made for Canada.

All the above elements contribute to the idea that ecotourism can integrate environment and economy. The concept has been given considerable support because of international concern over rapidly diminishing natural resources, the growing demand for tourism that will take people to desirable landscapes and experiences from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and the growing availability

Figure 8
The Adverse Effects of Tourism

[M]any people are claiming that the right to travel is in conflict with the rights of the environment, local cultures and humankind's cultural treasures.

In the face of an explosive growth in international tourism, many of the world's most beautiful and precious spots are being overrun by visitors. Some are suffering incalculable damage.

The once-pristine waters of the Mediterranean, Mexico's Acapulco Bay, Thailand's Pattaya and Malaysia's Penang are awash in human waste. Shorelines are marred by towering hotels built to accommodate millions of visitors.

The rare black and gold marble floor of St. Paul's in London and the unique mosaic floor of St. Mark's in Venice are being worn thin by the footprints of the thousands of people who visit the cathedrals each day. In Paris, the Cathedral of Notre Dame's floor is being eaten away by spilled soft drinks.

The 40,000 people who trek through the remote Himalayas in Nepal each year leave trails strewn with toilet paper, empty cans and bottles. Wood-burning to meet their demands for hot showers and cooked food is destroying forests.

The Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador, once a natural treasure of sea lions, penguins and unique species of birds, are overrun by more than 32,000 visitors each year — four times the number of 10 years ago.

Globe and Mail, October 26, 1991

of entrepreneurs — backed by modern transportation systems — who can deliver the product.

Criteria

In Canada there has been considerable recent debate on the criteria or key characteristics that give meaning to ecotourism. Following publication of Butler's work (Figure 5), criteria desirable for the delivery and consumption of ecotourism appeared at workshops in Banff and Calgary, and subsequently in the terms of reference for two studies commissioned by Alberta Tourism.

Key criteria identified through these activities are listed below. Ecotourism:

1. Involves a first-hand experience with natural, cultural, and social environments

2. Involves appropriate modes of travel to natural areas and/or traditional cultural sites

3. Heightens the tourist's awareness, understanding, and respect for the area's natural and cultural environment (through education and interpretation)

4. Is adapted to and respectful of the natural environment and local culture, and does not impose on their integrity or inherent values

5. Involves responsible and well-informed tour leaders

6. Leaves behind economic benefits and/or knowledge that support protection of the natural environment and the socioeconomic well-being of the host community

7. Is not facility intensive

8. Recognizes that the natural and cultural resources are the key element of the travel experience and, therefore, accepts that there are limits to use (supply-driven management): ecotourism as a part of mass tourism is limited only by the carrying capacity of an area

9. Requires that there be an educational experience for all persons associated with the activity — including travel agents, users, guides, and the local community

10. Promotes environmental ethics: there is need for all participants — users, operators, and managers — to abide by an ethical framework

11. Acknowledges the interdependence of operators, hosts, and resource managers and the benefits of partnership in resource stewardship

12. Includes local, grassroots involvement from planning through delivery

13. Provides economic benefits to the tourism industry

14. Must be developed in a manner consistent with sustainable development

15. Must be developed in a manner consistent with the global responsibilities that come with ecotourism

16. Must be conducted in circumstances where there is long-term security of the land base

17. Is a complete experience that begins in the travel office, where potential ecotourists are informed of the concept, its practice, and benefits to the individual, and continues throughout the experience

18. Requires codes of ethics and codes of practice to define preferred characteristics of ecotourism.

There will be differences in how each criterion is put into practice. This is apparent, for example, concerning facilities. While ecotourism does not generally require much in the way of facilities, the experience may require a facility base, even if the experience is not located directly there. Each case should be reviewed to determine whether the facility is a means to an end, or a product in itself. This leads to a need for long-range planning to provide the broad picture and case-by-case assessments to see how facilities "fit" with resource management objectives. The facilities example could be extended to matters of scale, materials used, continuity and frequency of use, and alternative benefits to the host community.

Toward A Definition

There is a need to define ecotourism. A definition could direct the development of detailed criteria or characteristics for individual undertakings, and would simplify evaluation.

Much contemporary thinking in Canada and elsewhere seems preoccupied with definition. This is not a redundant debate, because much that goes wrong with consumer expectations and product assessment can be attributed to a lack of a common definition. It is therefore desirable to produce a definition that makes clear the connection between the purpose of ecotourism and the ways it should be practised. Farrell and Runyan (1991) warn that, without definition, the term will become a catch-all applied indiscriminately to almost anything linking tourism and nature.

Numerous definitions of ecotourism are available in the wake of Ceballos-Lascurain. Farrell and Runyan describe ecotourism as "a contemporary strategy vital to maintenance of healthy ecosystems." At the recent Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) conference, Choegyel (1991) defined ecotourism in national parks and wildlife reserves as a

> *. . . successful balance of showing people the best of remote and beautiful protected areas with the minimum of environmental stress. A successful ecotourist operation involves local communities and benefits both local and national economies of the country.*

One definition emerged from a workshop coordinated by the Canadian Parks Service in February 1991. The resultant Banff/Bow Valley Network for Responsible Tourism defines ecotourism as socially and environmentally responsible tourism that provides a high-quality tourism experience while maintaining or improving the quality of the natural environment on which the tourism experience is based, and maintaining or enhancing the quality of life of the host community from a social or economic perspective.

Boo (1991) employed the Ceballos-Lascurain definition in discussing ecotourism in five Latin American and Caribbean countries, but some participants at the CEAC workshop in Calgary opted for a much more precise definition — "nature travel that contributes to conservation."

Brevity is a particular focus of definition discussion in Canada. Other important points include the need to link natural heritage and social and cultural heritage, and the need to present the term in its broadest context to secure the broadest possible support. Page Burt, Director of Marketing, Bathhurst Inlet Lodge, points to the need for simple terminology and avoidance of words such as "biocentric" and "homocentric," which may be difficult for those directly involved in practising ecotourism to interpret.

All these matters were raised at the CEAC workshop. Participants gave particular attention to the important role ecotourism plays in the education and sensitizing of tourists to the natural world. Most ecotourists will come from an urban environment, and their short exposure to a natural or relatively undeveloped landscape is an exceptional opportunity to stimulate a love of the land. The heightened sensibility of ecotourists will equip them to understand the need for — and to argue eloquently for — protection of valued environments. The ecotourist will better appreciate the adverse consequences of inappropriate or incompatible resource development, and the considerable contribution ecotourism can make to environmentally sustainable tourism.

The CEAC workshop's working groups produced two definitions of ecotourism. Ecotourism is:

> *A nature travel experience that contributes to conservation of the environment while maintaining and enhancing the integrity of the natural and socio-cultural elements.*
>
> *Nature travel that contributes to conservation and respects the integrity of ecosystems and local communities.*

From these contributions came a later definition provided by Alberta Tourism (1991): "a nature travel experience which contributes to the conservation of the ecosystem." A personal contribution by Seale at the CEAC workshop is also noteworthy. Ecotourism, said Seale, is travel in which the supplier and the consumer of the tourism product are committed:

- To understanding the intrinsic values of the natural and social environment
- To enjoying that environment directly on its own terms
- To enhancing the integrity of that environment.

A definition is needed to serve as a common base for the development of ecotourism in Canada. As with criteria, the definition must be broadly accepted and therefore should reflect the requirements set out above — brevity, simplicity, endorsing partnership over prescription, a linkage between heritage resources and host community, and meaningful contributions to conservation. Above all, it must reflect the potential for the individual to be sensitized and to support the integrity of natural environments and host communities.

The following definition is proposed for ecotourism in Canada:

> *Ecotourism is an enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of host communities.*

3 Ecotourism in Canada

What are the needs of ecotourism in Canada? What are the priorities for action? Where do opportunities exist to nurture ecotourism according to the criteria and definitions described in the previous section? What benefits can ecotourism bring to Canada, and what are the obvious constraints to the growth of ecotourism?

Needs of Ecotourism in Canada

A range of requirements for ecotourism to flourish in Canada was expressed at the CEAC workshop. In sum, these needs are considerable, but attainable in a country that has pristine and relatively unmodified natural landscapes, professional resource management agencies, and an increasingly informed public.

The first and fundamental need is for circumstances that make a complete ecotourism experience possible. These circumstances include:

- An ecologically intact resource base
- Qualified operators
- Qualified guides
- An ambience — a willingness of the community to participate
- The setting of appropriate expectations (using interpretive and other descriptive materials) and a subsequent first-hand experience for the ecotourist
- Meaningful contribution to sustenance of the local environment (through money and other means) and to appropriate interactions among affected parties
- Strategies by the resource management regime and beneficiary alike that consider the resource base, the visitor, and the operator
- Consideration of the diversity and scale of facilities that emphasizes appropriateness.

There is need for leaders. In Canada we need individuals prepared to promote the idea of ecotourism as a valid and desirable use of the land. The leaders among the affected communities, the operators, and the resource managers must link up to explore and lead in promoting the ecotourism message and its application. There may be considerable interest in different sectors, but there are not yet sufficient skills to turn the message into widespread action. This is where informed leaders come into play.

There is need to determine the appropriate basis for selling ecotourism. Much of the current appeal of ecotourism comes from the traditional "food and accommodation" experience when, of course, ecotourism is so much more than this.

There is need to recognize that ecotourists may contribute significantly to out-of-region opinion forming through the sharing of experiences. The significance of external opinion forming has been observed many times, but recently has been acutely reflected in public antipathy toward the expansion of the James Bay project in northern Quebec.

There is need to create opportunities for training operators and guides. The quality of

Canadian guides varies greatly, on both domestic and international ecotours. There is, however, incomplete understanding at this time of how, where, and by whom ecotour guides will be trained.

There is need, too, for advice on funding sources that might help develop the industry, and for information on taxation arrangements that affect the ecotourism operators at home and abroad. (According to Revenue Canada, tourism is not a taxable export, a decision that adversely affects domestic operators.)

There is need to monitor, evaluate, and seek feedback. Third parties should do the assessing, but so also should those who take ecotours, to determine the quality of the product and its effect on the consumer. There is also need to monitor the quality of the product delivered abroad by Canadian operators. The workshop consensus was that Canada must strive to provide the highest quality of ecotourism experience and management domestically and thus similar standards must be expected of Canadians operating overseas or participating in ecotourism abroad.

There is need for awards for good practice. This could well help to encourage good practice, elevate the profile of ecotourism, and give it a place in the tourism industry. Awards could come from the tourism industry, government, or elsewhere (e.g., institutions).

There is need to better understand the effects of government resource management policy on ecotourism opportunities, operators, and the resource base. Links are needed with those in government who make decisions about land use zoning and other matters with direct or indirect effects on ecotourism. At the workshop, an example was provided from British Columbia when one participant stated that the ministry responsible for Crown lands is making recreation opportunities available to the highest bidder. This largely excludes ecotourism operators, who have neither the capital nor the support from lending agencies to expand their businesses. An economic valuation process is required that ascribes appropriate values to ecotourism and rewards those who deliver the experience. In the British Columbia case, the East Kootenays was portrayed as one region where the opportunities for ecotourism are considerable but the means to provide it are inadequately served.

All these needs are expressed for Canada as a whole. At the regional or local level, such needs become specific. Agencies and organizations can be named and practical activities described that will advance ecotourism in certain geographical areas. Recent events in Banff National Park and vicinity show the potential to articulate ecotourism needs at the local level.

The Banff area has been the site of several seminars and workshops on ecotourism. One workshop convened in February 1991 set out the actions needed to foster ecotourism in the Banff/Bow Valley area. The participants proposed a range of actions required to get "buy-ins" to ecotourism and to promote the idea (Figure 9).

From the many needs expressed above, certain priorities emerge. These may be briefly stated.

- *Resource Management:* Designate and secure a representative land base for the pursuit of ecotourism in the various regions and ecosystems of Canada.
- *Land Use Planning:* Investigate and revamp planning processes at federal, provincial, and local levels so that land use policies, plans, and actual uses allow for the introduction and practice of ecotourism or activities that accommodate ecotourism.

Figure 9
Actions Needed to Encourage and Facilitate Ecotourism in Banff/Bow Valley, Alberta

- Training in hospitality and environmentally responsible tourism should be provided to staff working in the tourism industry in the area (i.e., Alberta Best could incorporate ecotourism component; Discover Banff program by Canadian Parks Service should be reviewed to see if it is covering needs from an environmental perspective).
- Environmental education for visitors is important and needed in a variety of forms, including outreach or extension programs before people come to the area, personal contact, programs and tours from hotels, radio messages, signage, and others.
- Education is essential; the experience should be tailored to the needs of the visitor, and should consider that location is not always important (i.e., does not have to be only in the backcountry).
- Businesses in the private sector should work together and encourage sound environmental practices; need to consider a reward system for businesses; consider a type of Better Environmental Business Bureau; need to develop understanding in businesses of economic benefits and implications; the Chamber of Commerce or proposed Visitor and Convention Bureau should be considered as coordinator.
- Study is needed to assess the ecotourism potential and products in the region.
- Encourage development of a code of ethics for ecotourism principles and operations; it would need to be developed by, or in conjunction with, the operators in the area to ensure their buy-in and support.
- Coordinate a symposium for operators to develop their own code of ethics (i.e., include tours of area, examples of other codes, background information; and allow operators to draft their own code for the region and buy into it); this would need a business-oriented name and focus, such as "Economy, Environment, and Tourism."
- Form follow-up group from today's session to further discussion and to develop a Banff region ecotourism code of ethics or conduct; advise federal minister of tourism that the industry is being proactive (i.e. in line with the new federal tourism policy "Tourism on the Threshold").
- Provide more opportunities for a "threshold experience" (i.e. a safe, nonthreatening, first-hand introduction to the natural and cultural environment) in areas such as Banff town environs, Lake Louise, and the Bow Valley Parkway.
- The hotel tax collected in the park should go back into improving the environment in the park; there is a need to lobby provincial politicians.
- The towns of Banff and Canmore should be staging areas and the focus of facilities to support ecotourism activities.
- Coordinate joint planning forums and round table discussions in the region to further the concept.
- One body for planning in the corridor would be beneficial.
- Consider follow-up forums through tourism organizations to further awareness of ecotourism/sustainable tourism/environmentally responsible tourism; options could be at the Alberta Conference on Tourism (TIAALTA, Jasper 1992), Alberta Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Inform wholesalers and others at such venues as Rendezvous Canada, National Tour Association, etc. that the principles of ecotourism apply in the area, and that codes of conduct are being developed.

Ecotourism Workshop
Banff, Alberta
February 6, 1991

- *Education*: Increase the level of understanding about the benefit of natural environments protected for ecotourism among government, operators, and consumers.

- *Stakeholder Coordination*: Create a climate inside and outside government in which various individuals and organizations may work toward a common goal of support for ecotourism.

- *Financial Management*: Acquire financial resources (funds, revenues, tax exemptions) to benefit all stakeholders in their support of ecotourism products.

- *Industry Development*: Develop an ecotourism industry in Canada by enhancing the product, its delivery, and the operator base for domestic and international consumption.

- *Marketing*: Create a marketing program to enhance ecotourism as a legitimate force in the Canadian tourism industry.

- *Economic Impact and Monitoring*: Promote the value of ecotourism in economic, social, and environmental terms.

Opportunities Presented by Ecotourism

There are ecotourism opportunities in many countries. Like many other tourism opportunities, ecotourism has an international clientele that brings with it foreign currency and spending habits. As South America has attracted foreign ecotourists from North America and Europe, Canada stands to draw heavily from the United States, Germany, and Japan, for example. Holing (1991) points to the advantages for Costa Rica of a deliberate national promotion of ecotourism.

> *Costa Rica launched its ambitious ecotourism program in the belief that making money by not cutting the rainforest is easier than making money by cutting it. Twelve percent of this tiny Central American republic's territory has been set aside as national parks and privately funded reserves. Together these lands provide shelter for almost all of the country's 1,500 distinct species of trees, 205 species of mammals, 850 species of birds, and more than 6,000 kinds of flowering plants, including 1,500 varieties of orchids.*
>
> *Replacing industrial and agricultural exploitation with ecotourism is paying off handsomely for Costa Rica. Tourism now ranks as the country's third largest source of income. The creation of locally owned and operated tours and lodges has created new employment opportunities. Visitor rates have leaped dramatically —70 percent in just eight years. A survey conducted by the World Wildlife Fund cited ecotourism as a main reason given by one out of three tourists for visiting Costa Rica. One-third of the approximately thirty travel agencies in Costa Rica specialize in ecotours. More importantly, the trend may help slow the rate of deforestation, which has been proceeding at a rate of 150,000 acres a year. Conservation International believes that ecotourism could become a major foreign exchange earner for a dozen or more tropical countries within a few years' time.*

Many international examples of ecotourism are worthy of attention. A few are presented in Figure 10. They illustrate ways operators, communities, managers, and consumers — and the environment — mutually benefit through strategic alliances that maintain healthy ecosystems.

Figure 10
Some International Examples of Ecotourism

Case 1
The Waitomo Caves of New Zealand are a destination for more than 250,000 tourists annually. Visitors are escorted through a subterranean maze of caves and limestone formations by a small passenger boat to observe glow worms hanging from the ceilings. By 1979, however, the glowing insect larvae were dying due to the number and size of tours. In order to better manage the cave environment and carbon dioxide levels, the caves were closed for study and subsequently reopened with smaller, more dispersed tours. Visitors are currently limited to 200 people per hour. Humidifiers were installed to solve humidity problems and the caves are constantly monitored. The result is a sustainable tourism product.

Case 2
In the El Triunfo Cloud Forest Reserve, State of Chiapas, Mexico, operators have been involved in the development of an organized ecotourism plan. The plan has created more facilities, supported local involvement, and ensured a flow of tourists who help to provide revenue for park management and for local people. Partnerships between conservationists and tour operators have been key to the success of the plan.

Case 3
Another excellent example of partnerships is the Maya Peace Park regional plan. Three nations have implemented a five-million-acre park development on their common borders. It is expected that several Mayan ruins will be protected.

Case 4
A rainforest nature reserve in the Bladen Watershed, Belize, Central America, is presently being established to protect one of the finest remaining forests of Central America. Tour companies are contributing to the conservation of tropical rainforests and coral reef environments. Their tours include education, kayaking adventures, archaeology, and the use of "jungle lodges." Part of the proceeds are donated to the "Program for Belize," through which 110,000 acres have been reserved to date.

Case 5
In Mexico (Baja and Cancun) endangered sea turtles are being protected through an international treaty that bans trade and harvesting from the beaches. Environmental zones or "turtle camps" are being established to preserve species and to attract tourists.

The Mexican government has started an education program to promote turtle preservation among local populations living near the turtle camps. Tour operators such as San Diego-based Baja Expeditions financially support these efforts. Their efforts have contributed to the Sea of Cortez being nominated as a wildlife preserve. At the same time, the popularity of the Baja area for ecotourism has risen dramatically.

Case 6
In Alaska, private sector interests and the state government have jointly developed a 700-acre site known as the Acasica Wildlife Refuge. Abundant wildlife viewing opportunities are guaranteed for cruise ship passengers touring the area. A five-kilometre-long road is being built for motor coaches to run quietly through the preserve; thus, the marriage of tourism and natural habitat has worked out exceptionally well.

Case 7
In Australia, at locations such as Stradbroke Island, Fraser Island, and Harvey Bay, several educational experiences await the tourist. Marine ecology, special biology, underwater study, local management, geology, and botany can be studied on land or in the water. Professional instructors and scientists are on hand in classrooms and on cruises. Whales are of considerable interest to ecotourists travelling to this part of the world.

Case 8
The Wildlife Reserve at Rio Lagartos and Celestun of the Yucatan, Mexico, promotes the protection of endangered species of flora and fauna. Small towns near Rio Lagartos rely on fishing, but tourism has helped diversity the local economy because the reserve attracts visitors from around the world.

There are examples of ecotourism activity across Canada (Figure 11). Whether it be whale watching on the east or west coast, providing nature-based experiences in the remote north, or voluntary local organizations creating a climate for ecotourism in and around a national park, Canadians are responding to the ecotourism opportunity. The response has been largely unorganized: an individual operator here, a group of local guides cooperating somewhere else, or in the case of the Trail of the Great Bear (Figure 12), an international effort contributing to an ecotourism strategy. There is a sense from workshops where representatives of these endeavours congregate that resource managers, planners, and the like are recognizing their sector, but much remains to be done in the way of promotion, education, and protection of natural and cultural environments.

Several reasons qualify Canada as an outstanding candidate for ecotourism development. These apply to every ecoregion in Canada, and individually and in concert, they can stimulate growth in the tourism economy and engage ecotourism as a powerful force for conservation.

First, the world sees Canada as having a diversity of natural landscapes and seascapes, and many are seen as pristine or at least largely unmodified by human artifacts and actions. It is an accessible land base offering a wide choice of ecotourism experiences unavailable in many other parts of the world. Also, ecotourism could be ever-changing in response to the seasonal rhythms of habitats and communities. Opportunities abound to bring the visitor into intimate contact with habitats, species, and culturally distinct communities.

Canada is thought of as a country with a strong conservation ethic. An environmentally aware and supportive public will foster ecotourism as sustainable development. There is, too, a corporate sector willing to participate in the development of appropriate ecotourism products: a tourism industry already on the way to generating guidelines and practices sensitive to effects on the environment.

There is confidence that Canada will continue to protect and conserve resources through a variety of public agencies and resource management strategies. The resource planning infrastructure and a well-developed parks and protected areas infrastructure are already in place.

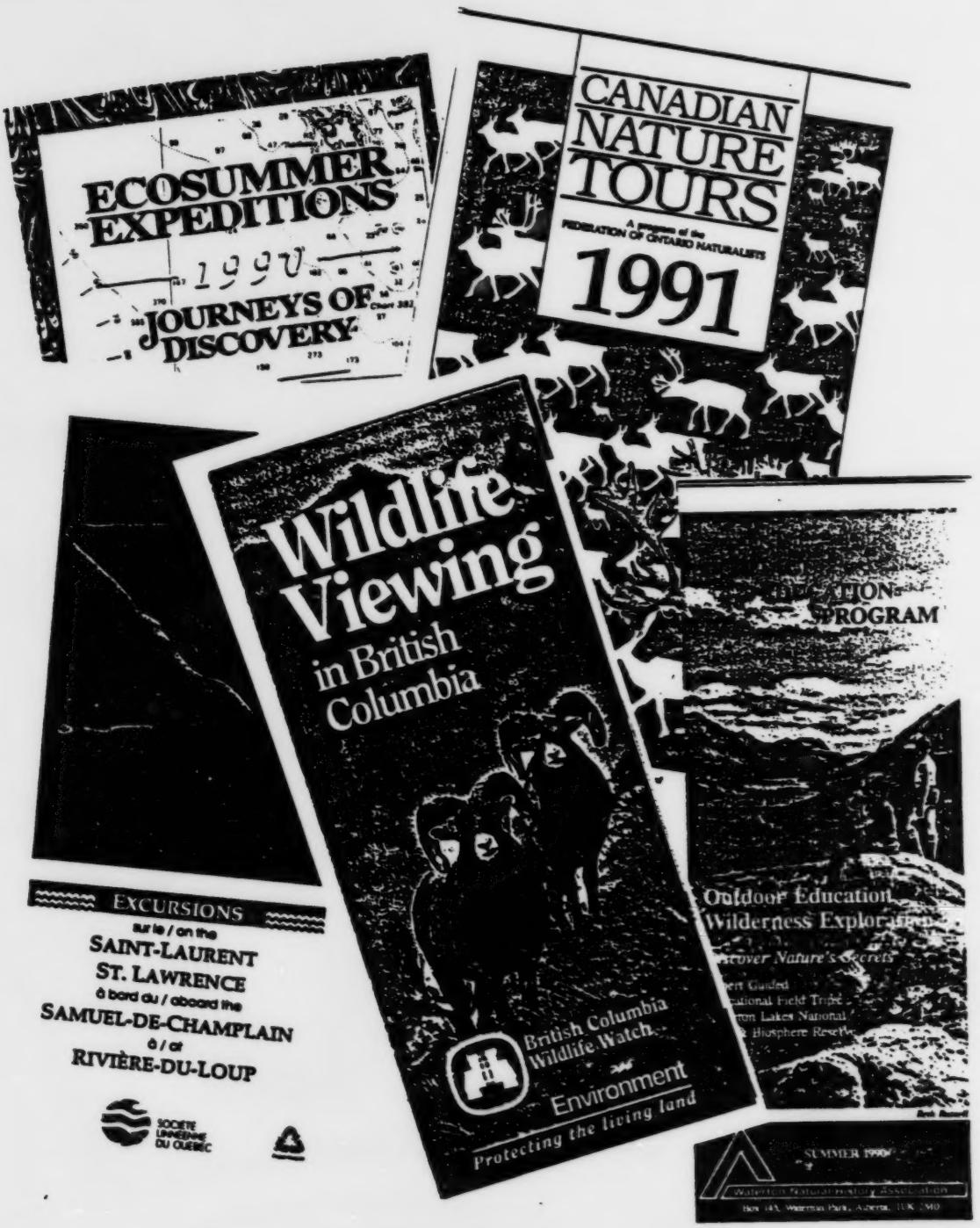
There is the sense that partnerships among constituencies with interests in ecotourism are possible in Canada. In so many ways Canadians already are debating matters that affect nation and region. Tourism is among the subjects being discussed, and the idea of local partnerships to develop environmentally sustainable tourism seems to be broadly accepted. This bodes well for ecotourism, which depends on the commitment of stakeholders in industry and government, and on the visitor's approval of the product.

Benefits of Ecotourism to Canada

Canada could gain significant economic rewards through ecotourism. Tourism worldwide is a $250 billion dollar per year industry. The industry is expected to continue to grow dramatically in both the numbers of people travelling and the expenditures they make. The number of people travelling to enjoy a nature-related experience such as wildlife viewing is impressive, and their economic impact equally impressive. Filion (1991) states the possibility of there being as many as 157 million such travellers globally with accompanying expenditures in the billions.

What have been some benefits to date in North America and in Canada? Consider the following statistics. Bird watching has attracted nearly 30 million North Americans.

Figure 11
Ecotourism Opportunities Across Canada



Bird watchers in Point Pelee National Park generate $6 million annually (Figure 13). Whale watching from Vancouver Island generated expenditures estimated at $4.2 million in 1988 (Duffus and Dearden 1990). Current revenues in British Columbia for outdoor adventure tourism, of which nature tourism is a significant part, are in the order of $133.7 million with over a million visitor-days of service provided in 1986. Another study estimates that a total of 10.7 million visitor-days per year (both residents and non-residents) are currently spent viewing wildlife; a further 14 million visitor-days are projected, given access to broader, larger markets (Ethos Consulting 1988). These numbers are impressive.

Ecotourism is a growing industry and highly desirable as an economic opportunity. It is an economically beneficial substitute for unsustainable land uses and a source of long-term economic prospects for communities largely bereft of other sources of income. Ecotourism ventures may begin with little investment and, depending on location, may hold

Figure 12
Trail of the Great Bear: Philosophy and Concept

The philosophy of the Trail of the Great Bear is to commemorate and perpetuate cultural, wildland, and national park values and to further an appreciation and an understanding of these values through promotion of appropriate recreation and tourism uses associated with them. The concept of the Trail of the Great Bear is to link Yellowstone, the world's first national park, through the world's first international peace park, Waterton/Glacier, to Canada's first national park, Banff. The concept encourages recreation and tourism uses, and developments and services that are compatible with, and promote a greater understanding of, existing natural, historical, and cultural resources and values, while recognizing that a healthy and economically viable tourism industry is essential to support these aims.

Trail of the Great Bear: Goals and Objectives

The goals of the Trail of the Great Bear are to:

- *Promote and perpetuate cultural, wildland, and national park values*
- *Further an appreciation and understanding of these values*
- *Encourage the development of an economically viable tourism industry that recognizes, encourages, and supports a mutually beneficial relationship between resource integrity and tourism use*
- *Increase tourism benefits to the region through the implementation of the Trail of the Great Bear concept*
- *Increase economic impacts to the region through tourism developments and activities that reflect the Trail of the Great Bear philosophy*
- *Develop the Trail of the Great Bear route as an international corridor with a high-quality recreation/vacation experience*

From these goals the following objectives have been derived.

- *To develop a tourism corridor offering access, interpretation, and education for wildlands, wildlife, and historical and cultural attractions within its boundary*
- *To design the corridor so that it links Banff National Park, Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park, and Yellowstone National Park*
- *To provide the opportunity for development of environmentally sensitive, sustainable tourism products, facilities, and services congruent with the philosophy of the Trail of the Great Bear*
- *To develop a concept that appeals to, and can be practically utilized by, broad market segments.*

Pannell Kerr Forster 1990

potential for four-season income. Ecotourism tends to happen in "peripheral and non-industralized regions" (Boo 1990) and may stimulate economic activity and stability in rural areas.

Local and regional benefits are the result of successful ecotourism. From direct employment in ecotourism, as guides, interpreters, and the like, to the trickle-down impact of young people learning, support of protection and conservation will pass into the hands of local people. Because local environments will be increasingly viewed as "special," ecotourist-derived partnerships will encourage local support for conservation. In short, local communities across Canada that understand the economic benefits of ecotourism will become valuable allies in protecting and conserving resources.

Opportunities for local involvement will not always be readily apparent. Professional advice, training programs, even seed funding, may be necessary. Tourism and economic affairs agencies can help, for instance, to

Figure 13
The Economic Potential of Ecotourism

The growth of nature tourism has been especially significant over the past decade. It is now estimated that some U.S. $25 thousand million is spent by tourists from the industrialized countries visiting less developed tropical countries for nature viewing. Nor is this interest confined to such exotic locales. In the United States, for example, the numbers participating in wildlife viewing as a primary activity increased from 83.2 million to 104.7 million between 1980 and 1985.

Interest in Canada mirrors this situation. About 22 percent of Canadians undertake trips with wildlife viewing as the main goal. Furthermore, 45.5 percent take part in nonhunting wildlife-oriented activities during trips taken for other reasons. The economic value of this activity is significant, generating about $5.1 billion in expenditures from recreational use in 1987.

Dutfus and Dearden n.d.

Bird watching results in substantial economic expenditures, conservatively estimated to be more than $20 billion each year in North America.

Point Pelee National Park, Ontario, Canada, one of the most desirable locations in the world for observing the spring migration of passerines, drew more than 57,000 gate visits by bird watchers in May 1987. We interviewed 603 randomly selected bird watchers to collect data on expenditures for travel and equipment, and willingness to pay for their experience.

Pelee bird watchers were highly educated (62.4 percent possessed a bachelor's degree or higher), and 57.7 percent were employed in professional occupations. Average household income was $57,175.

Total bird-watcher expenditures arising from their trips to Point Pelee amounted to $3.8 million in May 1987 or $5.4 million for the entire year. The average bird watcher at Point Pelee in May spends approximately $224 per trip or $66 per day of birding at Point Pelee. Local expenditures reported by visiting bird watchers amounted to $2.1 million in May 1987 and are estimated to be $3.2 million for the entire year.

The net worth of bird watching at Point Pelee includes more than just dollars spent. Economic measures of satisfactions gained from the sport reflect its true economic value. We estimated that bird watching at Point Pelee National Park in 1987 represented $6.3 million in net economic value.

Hvenegaard, Butler, and Krystofiak 1989

place in communities field officers whose role parallels that of agricultural extension agents in the latter sector.

Ways must be sought to create community support for ecotourism equity in the host regions and communities — either as direct fee for service and payment for goods or through contributions that benefit the resource base and the community at large. These contributions must come from both domestic ecotourism and from visitors and ecotourism firms outside Canada.

Ecotourism will benefit sustainable development in land use planning. As regional planners, for example, learn more about resource sustainability and social aspirations regarding sustainability, ecotourism will stimulate better plans. Regional planning will better incorporate the opportunities and relationships among various activities, including tourism, forestry, mining, commercial developments, agriculture, community initiatives, and historical or cultural plans. At the very least, each province will increasingly incorporate ecotourism opportunities in resource use plans to ensure the long-term protection and ecological integrity of key areas.

Constraints to Ecotourism in Canada

There are impediments to ecotourism development in Canada. For the most part they follow from the needs expressed earlier and should therefore be self-evident. They are worth listing so that they reinforce the actions required to make ecotourism successful in this country. The constraints are listed in Figure 14.

Figure 14
Ecotourism in Canada: Constraints

- The land base for ecotourism is shrinking as land is converted to other developments, resulting in a restriction in possible experiences. This is in part because, although a substantial resource planning infrastructure exists, very little planning is geared specifically to the tourism-land relationship. Commitment to true integrated resource planning, i.e., identification of a primary land use with a mosaic of other land uses, is missing.
- There is an absence of appropriate economic evaluation methods. Ecotourism is not valued when alternative resource uses are assessed; indeed in some instances ecotourism will be seen to conflict with alternative developments (e.g., harvesting of the northern forest). We need full-cost accounting. State of the Environment reporting should reflect this.
- Private-sector investment is limited because land designations for nature-related opportunities are unpredictable. Private investors are not encouraged by the absence of a workable approval process.
- There is an absence of baseline data and effects monitoring. We also lack empirical data on impacts on the resource base; hence, what are the rules, considering our imperfect knowledge of impacts?
- There is an absence of funding to do the necessary research; we need to tie in with existing programs to secure funding.
- Standards and/or regulations are lacking for field operators, community involvement — across the entire industry. There is an absence of standards for social behaviour both in the "field" (i.e., relationship to the environment) and in the "community." An operators' association could play a role, but appropriate interaction is needed (such as the efforts of the Quebec–Labrador Foundation).
- The consumer has certain expectations based on his perception of the ecotourism experience and what is being paid for. Without product guidelines, very different experiences may be imparted, especially if different operators have different goals. There is a lack of consistency of experience, i.e., appropriate quality of travel, accommodation, meals, and the ecotourism experience. Unfortunately, operators who could cater to the "complete ecotourist" may resist the prospect of doing so because increased associated costs make them uncompetitive. Presently one can get away with being an "ecotour operator" under any guise; there are no standards or regulations.
- Should we opt for codes of standards and practice rather than regulation? The Canadian Chemical Producers' Association has codes of practice and they have created measuring points. Fear of imposed regulations reportedly prompted the Association's action. One consideration is that, because many operators are small, they tend to pay limited attention to the subject of codes. Hence there is no need to introduce prescriptive arrangements that cannot be fulfilled. Any actions should consider the availability of persons or institutions capable of training.
- There are inadequate opportunities for training. Training is badly needed and this area must be addressed. Operators may not provide qualified facilitators; they do exist but are not always available when needed. There is a lack of good facilitators once we move beyond the parks. And what happens in instances where those who deliver may be denied opportunities (e.g., NWT with its residency requirement)?
- The marketing of ecotourism is difficult because there are so many small operators and few clearly identified ecotourism products. Also, there is the potential for ecotourism marketing by the tourism industry generally to be handled improperly.
- Ecotourism lacks leadership both nationally and locally (i.e., leaders with ecoskills). For example, local communities at newly popular destinations are often unaware of the value of the adjacent resource, and there is need to address parochial perceptions.

4 Staying on Path: Establishing Codes for Ecotourism

A national commitment to ecotourism cannot just "happen." It must come from the common will of individuals and organizations who manage and engage in ecotourism. It is a tangible expression of the partnerships forged in society for the common good. To fulfil its promise, therefore, ecotourism must be based on relationships, on sharing of ideas and consensus, on cooperation and self-policing rather than regulation. In its present embryonic condition in Canada, ecotourism has much of the exploratory character of any new idea or activity. It is peopled by a broad spectrum of the community and country. It tests the potentials and suffers the pitfalls of a product whose horizons are yet to be determined. Ecotourism is evolving and not yet amenable to imposed forms and practices.

Yet in the absence of policy, regulation, and standards — perhaps simply *because* they are absent — participants in ecotourism are joining forces to create the means for ecotourism to fulfil its potential. The thrust has come from the grassroots and it has been largely local or regional; the perceived need is to discuss the ethics and confirm the practice of ecotourism. In large measure, it is a statement by affected resource managers and operators, as well as conservation organizations and public commentators, that this component of the tourism industry must put its house in order. Should it fail to do so, there is always the prospect that public authorities and agencies will prescribe laws, regulations, and standards to impose order.

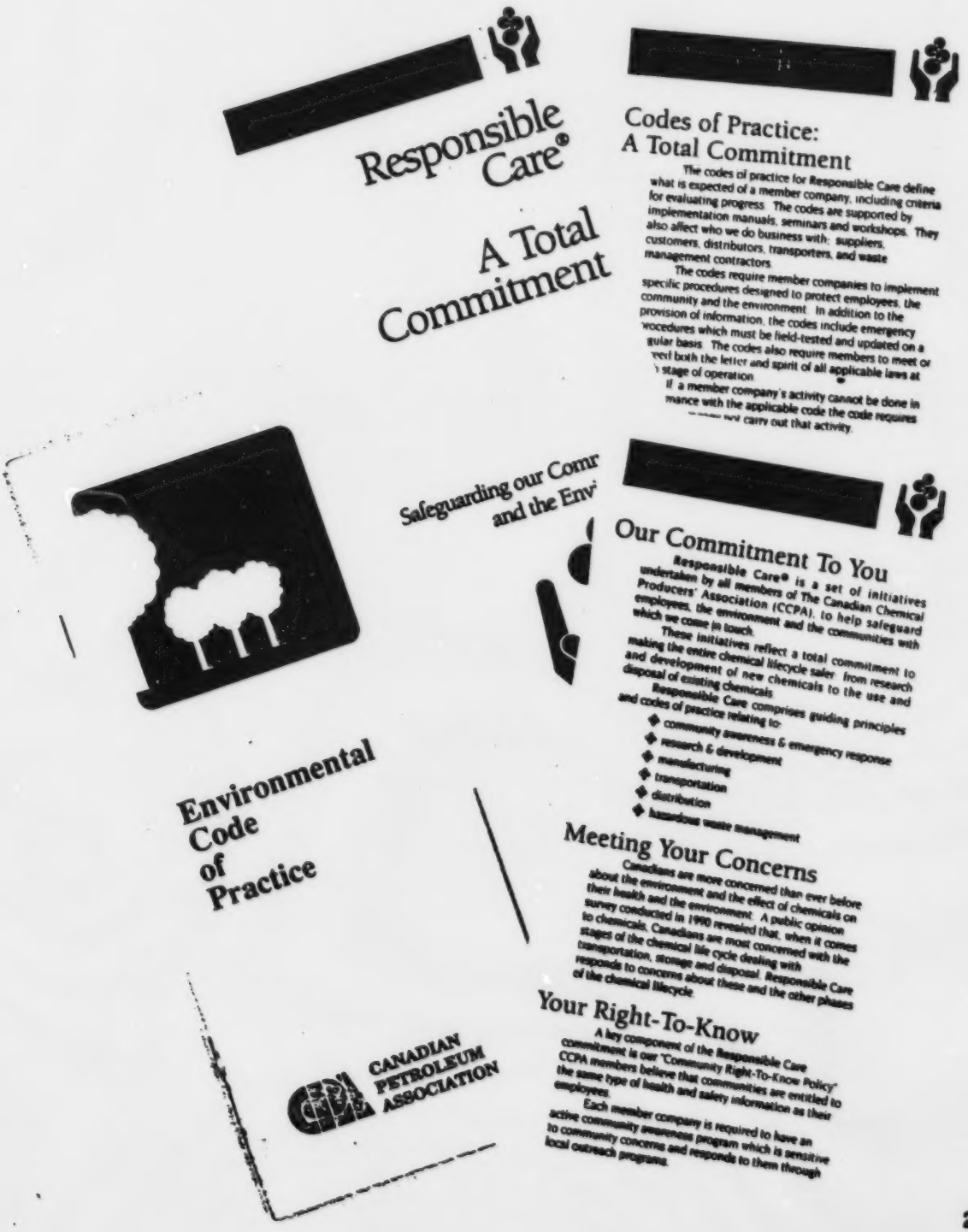
In Canada, codes of ethics and practice are emerging as the principal vehicles for local or regional cooperation in ecotourism planning and delivery. Some codes already exist; others are advocated or are evolving. Experience elsewhere is certainly being considered, but not at the expense of local innovation and adaptation.

Philosophical and behaviourial codes have long been with us as formal or informal expressions of conduct in human affairs. Individuals or groups who break strict codes risk exclusion, banishment; informal codes are strictly voluntary, calling for individual, group, or societal self-regulation. In the area of environment and tourism, "countryside codes" and "traveller's codes" are long-established. Their profile and impact have been emphasized lately in response to a broadly perceived need to develop codes to guide sustainable development. The "voluntary" strategy is not exclusive to tourism, as the Canadian Petroleum Association and the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association examples in Figure 15 show.

Codes fall into two main categories: codes of ethics or guiding principles, and codes of practice or conduct. The former are philosophical or value-based; the latter are more specific to actual practice in a local situation. Moreover, while codes of ethics ideally should apply universally to all parties associated with ecotourism, there may be benefits in having different sets of conduct codes for operators and visitors.

The international tourism landscape is replete with codes. In environmental management and tourism, they include the Annapurna Conservation Area Project Minimum Impact Code (Nepal), National Au-

Figure 15
Environmental Codes for Industrial Sectors


Responsible Care®
A Total Commitment
Codes of Practice:
A Total Commitment
The codes of practice for Responsible Care define what is expected of a member company, including criteria for evaluating progress. The codes are supported by implementation manuals, seminars and workshops. They also affect who we do business with: suppliers, customers, distributors, transporters, and waste management contractors.
The codes require member companies to implement specific procedures designed to protect employees, the community and the environment. In addition to the provision of information, the codes include emergency procedures which must be field-tested and updated on a regular basis. The codes also require members to meet or exceed both the letter and spirit of all applicable laws at every stage of operation.
If a member company's activity cannot be done in accordance with the applicable code the code requires [illegible] carry out that activity.
Safeguarding our Comm
and the Env
Our Commitment To You
Responsible Care® is a set of initiatives undertaken by all members of The Canadian Chemical Producers' Association (CCPA), to help safeguard employees, the environment and the communities with which we come in touch.
These initiatives reflect a total commitment to making the entire chemical lifecycle safer from research and development of new chemicals to the use and disposal of existing chemicals.
Responsible Care comprises guiding principles and codes of practice relating to:
community awareness & emergency response
research & development
manufacturing
transportation
distribution
hazardous waste management
Meeting Your Concerns
Canadians are more concerned than ever before about the environment and the effect of chemicals on their health and the environment. A public opinion survey conducted in 1990 revealed that, when it comes to chemicals, Canadians are most concerned with the stages of the chemical life cycle dealing with transportation, storage and disposal. Responsible Care responds to concerns about these and the other phases of the chemical lifecycle.
Your Right-To-Know
A key component of the Responsible Care commitment is our "Community Right-To-Know Policy". CCPA members believe that communities are entitled to the same type of health and safety information as their employees.
Each member company is required to have an active community awareness program which is sensitive to community concerns and responds to them through local outreach programs.
Environmental
Code
of
Practice
CANADIAN
PETROLEUM
ASSOCIATION

dubon Society Travel Ethic and Sobek Code of Behaviour (Antarctica), the Environmental Care Code (New Zealand), the Countryside Commission and English Tourist Board Code (U.K.), and the Traveller's Code of Ethics prepared by the Economical Coalition on Third World Tourism. In Canada, several codes have come from the recently completed work of the national Tourism Sector Dialogue on sustainable development (see Figure 16).

Codes of ethics specific to ecotourism have not been encountered, but codes of practice do exist. Among the most detailed of these are the Code of Conduct for Commercial Tour Operators in Gwaii Haanas/South Moresby and guidelines by Fisheries and Oceans Canada to small craft owners and tour boat captains respecting passage near whales in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The form codes should take has been discussed in the CEAC workshop and elsewhere. Several conditions have been recognized.

1. There should be both a code of ethics and codes of practice, the latter being subdivided into codes for operators and consumers. Different codes may

Figure 16
Codes of Ethics for the Industry

The Canadian Tourism Industry recognizes that the long-term sustainability of tourism in Canada depends on delivering a high-quality product and a continuing welcoming spirit among our employees and within our host communities. It depends as well on the wise use and conservation of our natural resources; the protection and enhancement of our environment; and the preservation of our cultural, historic, and aesthetic resources. Accordingly, in our policies, plans, decisions, and actions, we will:

1. *Commit to excellence in the quality of tourism and hospitality experiences provided to our clients through a motivated and caring staff.*
2. *Encourage an appreciation of, and respect for, our natural, cultural, and aesthetic heritage among our clients, staff, and stakeholders, and within our communities.*
3. *Respect the values and aspirations of our host communities and strive to provide services and facilities in a manner which contributes to community identity, pride, aesthetics, and the quality of life of residents.*
4. *Strive to achieve tourism development in a manner which harmonizes economic objectives with the protection and enhancement of our natural, cultural, and aesthetic heritage.*
5. *Be efficient in the use of all natural resources, manage waste in an environmentally responsible manner, and strive to eliminate or minimize pollution in all its forms.*
6. *Cooperate with our colleagues within the tourism industry and other industries, towards the goal of sustainable development and an improved quality of life for all Canadians.*
7. *Support tourists in their quest for a greater understanding and appreciation of nature and their neighbours in the global village. Work with and through national and international organizations in helping to build a better world through tourism.*

Tourism Industry Association of Canada
National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy
1992

emerge for different types of operations.

2. Certain codes could be generic so that regions, local areas, and individual entrepreneurs may adapt them according to circumstance and condition.

3. Codes must recognize the preeminence of environment and resources in ecotourism and the importance of carrying capacity, facility placement, and other means to maintain and enhance environmental integrity and fulfil sustainable development objectives.

4. Codes need to generate total commitment to quality; all levels need to subscribe to quality; quality must be grounded in vision and principles that all believe in; quality is needed to create proper attitudes in visitors, residents, and operators alike.

5. When they are developed, codes must specify the roles of players and their responsibilities.

6. Procedures for delivering codes to their target audiences need to be identified, such as through industry, association, and government publications.

7. Codes must be widely publicized, using public service announcements, television, and radio.

8. Exemplary application of codes should be publicized and rewarded to set examples for others to follow.

9. Codes should present ecotourism as a prestigious form of tourism, rewarding performance and offering the use of an ecostamp for complying agencies and operators.

10. Codes should include a monitoring system to determine compliance or the lack of it. An action line (1-800 numbers) or other means should be considered for monitors to report lack of compliance.

11. Codes must be designed to acknowledge both the economic and ecological benefits for all of properly conducted ecotourism.

12. Codes should acknowledge the various institutional arrangements in place for conserving the host environment and society.

With regard to codes for operators and visitors, the following matters have been recognized for application in Canada (Banff/Bow Valley Network for Responsible Tourism 1991).

Visitor Codes

- Should stress that the ecotourism experience begins at home and continues after the trip is over
- Should allow the visitor to easily understand what should and should not be done
- Should include information on why it is important to have a personal code of conduct when ecotouring
- Should advise visitors of what to look for in environmentally sound tourism operations, including in the code for operators
- Should indicate the behaviour expected of visitors and must recognize that the practices of the operator are sensitive to the environment
- Should have minimum impact codes for activities such as horse use and backcountry biking

- Should espouse use of recyclable materials, not feeding or harassing wildlife, walking on designated trails, choosing operators who dispose of effluent in a responsible way, and so on.

Operator Codes

- Operators must undertake and communicate specific practices to visitors; they must advise potential customers of their special practices and products so that buyers are aware and can make informed choices, and operators must in fact do what they say they are going to do.
- There should be a general section of a code that applies to all operators, regardless of type of activity.
- Overall guiding principles should be included, such as: ensure that we cause minimal impact; preserve and protect this special place as it is for the appreciation, enjoyment, and enrichment of future generations.
- Overall principles could include such things as use recycled or recyclable materials, reduce or minimize effluents, and practise minimal impact.
- New developments must follow federal environmental assessment laws, regulations, and guidelines or provincial or territorial equivalents.
- Activity-specific items to consider include: keeping visitors safe from wildlife, guide standards and licensed guides, knowledge about environment and natural history, etiquette, garbage disposal, handling of transportation (such as buses left running), use of plastic or ceramic mugs rather than disposable cups.

A Proposed Code of Ecotourism Ethics for Canada

The following is a proposed code of ethics to cover all facets of ecotourism in Canada.

Persons who participate in ecotourism shall, through their policies, plans, decisions, and actions:

1. Acknowledge protection and conservation of the natural environment as the preeminent responsibility of all who engage in ecotourism activities
2. Commit to engage in ecotourism in ways that do not compromise the intrinsic values of natural environments and the cultural and social integrity of host communities
3. Recognize ecotourism to be a commitment to environmentally sustainable tourism and a meaningful contribution to the goal of sustainable development
4. Commit to enhancing personal or societal understanding and awareness of natural environments and associated human communities so as to develop appreciation and win support for resource conservation
5. Accept ecological principles as the preferred basis for determining the capacity of host landscapes to support ecotourism facilities and activities
6. Engage in personal behaviours that contribute to the spirit of partnership, sharing, and consensus with which ecotourism is imbued
7. Accept that ethical behaviour in ecotourism is global, to be subscribed to equally inside and beyond Canada.

5 The Scope for Public Policy

Canada has immense potential for the development of ecotourism. This country has an immediate opportunity to become a world leader in the field of ecotourism. Appropriate, enthusiastic, and visible development of ecotourism would contribute directly to this country's commitment to sustainable development and set standards that would benefit global ecotourism and sustainable development. Ecotourism can integrate natural resource planning and community decision making. Ecotourists travelling in Canada's regions might well strengthen the fabric of the nation. The low investment, judicious resource management, effective promotion and marketing, and community standards and partnerships of ecotourism could yield immense long-term benefits.

Every effort must be made to pursue this potential and to ensure that public and private development strategies recognize and incorporate ecotourism as a viable use of our natural and cultural resources. Consensus, negotiation, and cooperative thinking will carry ecotourism much further than prescriptive arrangements. Successful responses to universally negotiated guidelines and standards should be acknowledged and rewarded. Equally, blatant disregard for community standards should be identified and diminished through peer pressure.

The following recommendations are a collective means to realize these goals.

Recommendations

Fundamental

1. The federal, provincial, and territorial governments of Canada are encouraged to recognize the positive implications for environment, society, and the economy of developing and promoting ecotourism as an expression of sustainable development. Ecotourism spans conservation, protection, and enhancement of the heritage resource base.

2. The minister responsible for Tourism Canada is encouraged to join with his federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts; the Minister of the Environment; the tourism industry associations; and operators of ecotourism ventures in developing national standards for the practice of ecotourism in Canada. Standards would include definitions, principles, and codes of ethics and practice. Also included should be mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing, and revising standards and publicizing them through appropriate channels.

3. A National Committee on Ecotourism should be established under the aegis of Environment Canada (Canadian Parks Service and Canadian Wildlife Service), Industry, Science and Technology Canada (Tourism Canada), the Tourism Industry Association of Can-

ada, and the National Round Table to research, monitor, report, and disseminate information on ecotourism in Canada and progress of the industry internationally. The committee would be a central vehicle to monitor ecotourism definitions, principles, and codes, and to communicate industry developments to governments, the industry, and the public.

4. The ministers of environment and tourism are advised to pursue a strategy of partnerships, encouragement, and incentives rather than one of prescription and regulation in the development of ecotourism in Canada. With guidelines and the setting of achievement standards, public authorities will establish an environment in which ecotourism may flourish. As a corollary, the ministers are advised to consult with partners to identify and appropriately discourage members of the ecotourism industry and public agencies who improperly define and promote the spirit and purpose of ecotourism.

5. There is an urgent need for Environment Canada and Tourism Canada to prepare a national statement on the range of ecotourism assets available, and to publicize these assets to ensure they continue to be available to the ecotourism market through appropriate policies and practices in Canada's regions.

Resource Management

6. Ecotourism products and services can apply both to parks and other protected landscapes and to unprotected landscapes subject to other land management objectives. Accordingly, ecotourism's potential usefulness in natural resource policy should be acknowledged and built in to public policy for land management at all levels in Canada.

Extant Policy

7. The potential for ecotourism should be considered in all types of environmental assessments. An "environmental guidelines form document" should be provided to facilitate organized treatment during individual EIA reviews.

8. The Wildlife Ministers' Council of Canada should consider revisiting *A Wildlife Policy for Canada* (1990) to incorporate ecotourism.

9. Ecotourism should be acknowledged in the current review of Canada's national park policy.

Associations

10. Federal and provincial environment and tourism ministers should encourage the formation of, and support, provincial and territorial ecotourism associations to promote, research, and monitor ecotourism regionally; these would eventually contribute representatives to a national association. (A national association for ecotourism would be formed once regional associations had been developed. The recent experience of the Canadian Environmental Industry Association is a lesson in this regard. The national association would lobby government, publicize national and international standards, provide training, establish connections to provincial and territorial associations, and reward excellence.)

Research

11. Ecotourism should be acknowledged as an environmental industry product in Industry, Science and Technology Canada's environmental industries sector, and market research on ecotourism

should be built into the department's data collection.

12. There is merit in the Canadian Parks Service and Tourism Canada taking a lead role in facilitating the research required to identify opportunities for development of ecotourism in Canada.

13. Readily accessible resource centres linked to provincial, territorial, and national ecotourism activities and initiatives should be established in Canada's regions, potentially in concert with formation of regional ecotourism associations.

International Ecotourism

14. Canada should be at the forefront of global efforts to establish international standards for ecotourism. The Minister of the Environment and the minister responsible for tourism should join with the Tourism Industry Association of Canada to promote such standards and encourage adherence to them by Canadian ecotourism operators and Canadian ecotourists outside Canada.

15. Canada should encourage the World Tourism Organization in Canada to assume a lead role in publicizing the goals, environmental and socioeconomic benefits, principles and standards, and mechanics of ecotourism to governments, tourism industry associations, and conservation organizations.

Audits

16. Environmental audits that take into account ecotourism, the resource base, other land use and land management activities, and socio-cultural aspects should be prepared. Early audits of current forestry and wildlife uses, and management practices and their implications for ecotourism now and in the future, would be useful. Such audits could be productively co-sponsored by provincial departments of environment and tourism and provincial tourism associations.

17. Accounting systems should recognize and quantify the real value(s) of ecotourism. The ministers of environment and tourism are encouraged to work with universities and other bodies to explore and report on the full benefits to firms of developing ecotourism throughout Canada, and to widely publicize findings to other governments, the tourism industry, and the public.

Education and Training

18. Ecotourism should involve competent, trained individuals (operators, guides, local facilitators, or professional resource managers). Governments and industry should provide training and materials. Cooperative arrangements should be developed between government, industry, and educational centres in this regard.

19. Ecotourism operators and ecotourists are to be encouraged in understanding that ecotourism is intended to be a completely sustainable experience — from home through ecotourism travel and back to place of departure. Ecotourism is to be promoted as a sensitizing or enlightening educational experience with enduring benefits for the ecotourist.

Funding

20. Funding should be directed to understanding, developing, and monitoring ecotourism in Canada. Funding should come from government and industry, from sources such as the Green Plan and the Environmental Partners Fund and corporate environmental programs.

Marketing and Promotion

21. Ecotourism requires vigorous promotion in Canada and internationally, both to elevate the profile of the industry and to speed its acceptance as a legitimate land use in resource planning.

22. Existing and new mechanisms should be used to market and to promote ecotourism. Environment Canada and Tourism Canada in particular must seize the opportunity to market ecotourism in Canada and internationally.

Rewards

23. The tourism industry and governments should establish means to recognize and reward good ecotourism products or services.

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